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Translating Ogura Hyakunin Isshu

An analysis of translating decorative language from Japanese to English

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Abstract

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In this thesis, translation of classical Japanese poetry into English will be examined by analysing translations of five selected poems from the anthology *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu*. Translations by three different translators will be examined and the differences highlighted. The main focus will be on examining how the decorative language is translated. Venuti's translation theory will be presented and necessary background information will be given.

The hypothesis for this study was that translating classical Japanese poetry to English will pose difficulties not only due to the aspect of translation, but also more specific to the field of classical poetry. These difficulties were expected to be especially prevalent concerning the decorative language, which is used often in classical Japanese poetry. The results supported this hypothesis. The translations examined varied greatly, which indicates that there is no simple way to translate the decorative language present in classical Japanese poetry.

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Terminology

This thesis will use a modified version of the Hepburn romanization system. は, when written as a particle will be romanised as *wa*, but when not, as *ha*; the particle を will be romanised as *wo* and long vowels will be marked via the use of a macron (¯).

Waka - has two meanings, originally meaning “Japanese poem” but more recently interchangeable with *tanka.*

Tanka - a type of *waka*, generally made up of 31 syllables and five lines. Follows the metre 5-7-5-7-7.

Karuta - A Japanese one-on-one card game using one hundred cards, each corresponding to one of the poems included in *Hyakunin Isshu*.

Man-ōshū - the oldest known collection of Japanese *waka* poems, literally “Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves”.

Shūishū - the third imperial anthology of *waka* from the *Heian* period (794-1185).

Headnote (*kotoba-gaki*) - notation that describes the occasion for which the poem was composed.

Thirty-Six Poetic Immortals - a group of poets selected by a famous poet *Fujiwara no Kintō* as the best examples of Japanese poetic ability.

1. Introduction

1.1 Topic

Ogura Hyakunin Isshu is an anthology of one hundred classical Japanese poems, written by one hundred different Japanese poets and composed between the eighth and thirteenth century. It is often simply referred to as *Hyakunin Isshu*, and shall be referred to as such in this thesis as well. The collection is one of the most significant works in Japanese history and is still relevant today.

Owing to globalisation and the recent growing interest in Japanese culture in the western world, translating classical Japanese literature to English have been done more than ever before. In order to better understand these difficulties that are expected to occur, this thesis will aim to analyse the subject of translation by examining four different translations by three different translators of five specific poems from *Hyakunin Isshu.*

When starting the research into the topic of classical Japanese poetry, the hypothesis was that translating classical Japanese poetry to English will pose difficulties not only due to the aspect of translation, but more specific to the field of classical poetry. These difficulties were expected to be especially prevalent concerning the decorative language, which is used often in classical Japanese poetry. That is why this thesis will focus on comparing translations by employing qualitative modes of enquiry and answering the following research questions.

- How was the decorative language translated from Japanese to English?
- Was the meaning of the poem or the nuance changed significantly when translating? If so, in what way?
- What differences appear in the English translations?

Due to practical constraints, this paper cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of every single poem of the hundred included in the anthology. Therefore the focus will be on five specific poems in order to provide a complete and concise overview of the differences that appear in both the nuances and manners of translating the Japanese decorative language.

1.2 Previous studies

Firstly, the most recent study this thesis will build upon is the thesis by A. Bouchikas (2017), which analyses translations of select poems in *Hyakunin Isshu* to Danish. There is a focus on surveying the difficulties that present themselves when translating Japanese to Danish. A similar focus is followed, although with translations to English. Bouchikas also provides an original translation for each of the poems selected, which will not be done in the thesis at hand.

Secondly, there is a thesis by Layfield (2011), which focuses on translating *kakekotoba* (or pivot words) to English. Similarly to the previous one mentioned, a select few of the poems have been chosen and the focus lies on looking at the difficulties that arise when translating *kakekotoba*. Unlike the thesis at hand, the focus is narrowed to only *kakekotoba* and other types of decorative language are not looked at.

Thirdly, there is an article by G. Lindberg-Wada in the Nobel Symposium 110 (1999) about the specific difficulties presented by translating from non indo-European languages. Although this article does not concern itself with poetry specifically, it writes about translation and has its focus in analysing the difficulties that arise in these circumstances.

Lastly, there was a study done by R. Clements (2015), looking at translations in early modern Japan from a macroscopic perspective. Significant analysis and discussion on the subject was presented by the pioneering study at a large scale, with its focus

on answering the following three questions: what forms of translation were practiced, who were the translators and what they were translating. In comparison, the current thesis at hand will be concerning itself with a much narrower perspective.

1.3 Methodology

The methodological approach taken in this thesis will follow a case-study design, with in-depth analysis of translations of the poems from *Hyakunin Isshu* that have been selected for this thesis. These poems shall be as follows. Poem number three by a court poet *Kakinamoto no Hitomaro*, poem number ten attributed to *Semimaru*, poem number eighteen by lord *Fujiwara no Toshiyuki*, poem number fifty-one by *Fujiwara no Sanekata* and poem seventy-four by lord *Minamoto no Toshiyori*.

For each poem, first a Japanese version and a version in *romaji* will be shown, then an explanation of the poem will be given. This explanation will aim to give a general understanding of the poem in its original form. After that, four translations will be highlighted in chronological order. First will be a translation by MacCauley from *Hyakunin-Isshu (Single Songs of a Hundred Poets) and Nori no Hatsu-Ne (The Dominant Note of the Law)* (1917), second two translations by Mostow, first from the book *Pictures of the heart* (1996) and second *The Hundred Poets Compared* (2007). The last translation used will be by McMillan from the book *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each* (2008). Next, each translation shall be analysed and the differences from the original poems and the other translations will be highlighted for each translation. These differences are what will be analysed in order to come to a better understanding of the way decorative language is translated to English.

In order to best analyse the poems, it would be best to base the history and background of the poems on the notes included in the original collection compiled by *Fujiwara Teika.* Due to time and location constraints, it was not possible to find the by the poet's own original notes for the purpose of this thesis. Therefore, the majority of the background for the poems shall be based off of Mostow's *Pictures of the heart* (1996), which includes descriptions, background and translations of the headnotes to

each of the poems, and *Shigeo's Hyakunin Isshu* (2016), which is a Japanese book containing explanations for each of the poems.

1.4 Outline

Following the Introduction, this paper shall first give a comprehensive overview of the background information necessary for the analysis. First, an explanation of the field of translation studies will be given and the applicable translation theory will be highlighted, followed by an explanation of translating classical Japanese poetry. Then, the history and significance of Ogura *Hyakunin Isshu* and the decorative language this thesis will focus on will be explained.

The study and discussion of this thesis will be laid out as follows. For each of the selected poems, first the Japanese version will be shown in both Japanese and romaji. The Japanese versions will be from the book *Hyakunin Isshu*, by *Shigeo Yamada* (2016). Then the general meaning of the poem will be explained, including a translation of the meaning of the poem written by *Shigeo* (2016).

Once the background of the poems are given and the meaning explained, four different translations will be highlighted, first by MacCauley from the book *Hyakunin-Isshu (Single Songs of a Hundred Poets) and Nori no Hatsu-Ne (The Dominant Note of the Law)* (1917), then two translations by Mostow, one from *Pictures of the heart* (1996) and another from *The Hundred Poets Compared* (2007) and lastly a translation by McMillanIn from *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each* (2008). The reason why there will be two translations by the same author is the fact that the book *The Hundred Poets Compared*, is written in collaboration with H. J. Herwing and in its introduction it is stated that even though the translations are based on those in the *Pictures of the heart*, there were some changes made to reflect the new context. The translations will be first analysed for each poem separately. Once each of the poems has been analysed separately, there will be an overall comparison and discussion. Lastly, the conclusion will be drawn, answering the initial hypothesis and the research questions.

2. Theory and background

2.1 Translation theory

Throughout history, both written and spoken translations have played a crucial role in communication between people. That being said, the study of translation as an academic subject itself was only really founded in the second half of the twentieth century. Before that, translation was generally viewed by western scholars as either a language teaching tool or as a part of comparative literature (Munday 2012). In recent years, on the other hand, the field of translation studies has expanded exponentially.

Before the academic interest in translation, the general trend of western translation theory favoured the literal, that being word-for-word translation style (Munday 2012). Nowadays, on the other hand, in the western world the main focus on translation seems to be the fluency of the end product. As Lawrence Venuti puts it in his book *The Translator's Invisibility*, a good and fluent translation must read as if it was not written in any other language first (Venuti 2008). Therefore, one can say that the leading translation theory in the modern world concerns itself mainly with domestication. The comparison between the translations highlighted in this thesis will be mainly based off of this translation theory, namely whether the translations that were published later tend to favour a more fluent form or not.

2.2 Translating classical Japanese poetry

Poetry in general can oftentimes cause great difficulty for translators. In *Pictures of the Heart*, Mostow quotes Archibald MacLeish's words: "A poem should not mean / But be." (Mostow 1996, p.3). This point of view often excludes interpretation, and thus translations of poems are often thought of as either being "right" or "wrong". Furthermore, in essence this means that a poem should not be accompanied by

explanations or notes, but carry itself without them. Naturally, one expects that in recent years this philosophy has changed along with the general translation theory. Therefore, one of the observations that this thesis aims to make is whether or not the form of the translations differs depending on when they were published.

When translating classical Japanese poetry, according to various translators, one can pinpoint some key difficulties which arise. One of these key difficulties is the tendency for the classical Japanese poets to express a large amount of nuance with short expressions which can be extremely difficult to properly express in English (McMillan 2008, p.xxvii). This is due to the often made stylistic choice to attempt to capture extremely simple scenes with subtlety and grace. Ever since the Heian era (794 - 1185 CE), there has been a conscious effort made to reach aesthetics such as *wabi sabi*, *mono no aware*, and *ma* (Prusinski 2012). If this is not taken into account, it can oftentimes cause the English translation of the poem to feel fragmented or as if something was missing.

Another key point one must make a note of when approaching classical Japanese poetry is the fact that it is greatly bound in convention. One example of this given by McMillan (2008, p.xxvi) is the use of names of places which are often used as codes with fixed associations. One instance of this is "*Ōsaka*", which refers to the barrier and not the modern day city known by the same name and is used to mean "to meet", especially for the meeting of lovers. This is referred to as *uta-makura* and will be explained further below.

Despite the amount of various different translations of *Hyakunin Isshu* to English, ever since the twentieth century most of them have included little commentary and notations (McMillan 2008, p.xxiii). That custom appears to stem from the belief that poetry is meant to speak for itself. Unfortunately, that leaves the reader in a somewhat difficult situation due to all of the hidden meaning that is written into classical Japanese poetry and takes away the English readers' chance to experience the poetry as it is read by most Japanese speakers, that being with commentary, notes on differing interpretations and the historical background.

2.3 *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu*

Hyakunin Isshu has been the most widely known and popular collection of Japanese literature. To date, there have been a large variety of translations of the poems and the collection has been translated into many different languages, gaining more and more popularity in the western world in recent decades. The poems have also been adapted to a card game known as *karuta*.

The hundred poems of *Hyakunin isshu* were compiled by a scholar and poet by the name of *Fujiwara Teika* (1162-1241 CE) (McMillan 2008, p.xix). It is not known why *Teika* chose exactly these hundred poems, with their selection ranging from poems picked from the eight century anthology *Man-ōshū* to those from the thirteenth century and ranging in theme from description of nature scenes to lost love (McMillan 2008, p.xx1). Since the poems are in a chronological order though, one could say that the anthology is a compact history of classical Japanese poetry from the seventh to the mid-thirteenth century.

Each of the hundred poems included in *Hyakunin Isshu* are a type of poem known as *tanka*, meaning “short poem” and is a type of *waka*, which literally means “Japanese poem”. They usually consists of five rows and are written in a 5-7-5-7-7 metre, meaning each row generally has its specific amount of *on,* “syllabic units” (Heinrich 2009).

There have been dozens of translations of *Hyakunin Isshu*, all with their own interpretations of the work and none of them can be called inherently better or worse than the others. This thesis does not have the intention to compare the worth of these literary works or find the "objective truth" regarding translating poetry, it looks instead to understand why these differences are there and how different translators have translated the decorative language to English.

2.4 Decorative language

Much of the language in classical Japanese poetry can be interpreted in multiple different ways or is decorative in nature. This type of language shall be referred to as decorative language in this thesis. There are several differing types of decorative language, each with their own identifying markers and the ones relevant to this thesis shall be explained shortly here.

Uta-makura, (literally “poem pillow”) is arguably the most fundamental technique of Japanese poetry at the lexical level. This is a word or a phrase, upon which the entire poem may rest. Since the twelfth century, this term has often been used to refer to place names which have become famous through poetry, with the most famous of these being *Ōsaka,* which should not be confused with the modern city, carrying the meaning of a place where people meet (McMillan 2008, p.xxvi). Another is "Naniwa bay", which used to be famous for meeting pleasure girls (McMillan 2008, p.xxvi). Connected to that expression, “Reeds cut at Naniwa” would signify either brevity or brief encounters, including one-night stands.

Makura-kotoba (literally "pillow words") is a fixed word or phrase which are used for certain words as embellishments. It could be said that the *makura-kotoba* is like a proverbial pillow for the following word to rest upon. Generally, it is made up of five syllables (but sometimes four or six) or one line in length and serve both to enhance the rhythm and the tone of the poems they appear in. It is often stated that the meanings of many *makura-kotoba* have been lost to the passing of time, but there have been lists of *makura-kotoba* and their meanings compiled by scholars of classical Japanese poetry such as Dr. J.L Pierson (1964). Naturally, there are still some that are used with their literal meaning. For example the expression *ama-gumo no* meaning roughly "like the (rain) clouds in the sky" (Pierson 1964).

Jo-kotoba are used when a modifying phrase (*makura-kotoba*) exceeds its regular length. *Jo* means “preface”, therefore *jokotoba* are “preface words”. They can be

based on a metaphoric relationship and are often introduced by pivot words. There are two types of *jokotoba*: *mushin-no-jo*, which are connected or associated through phonetic pronunciation and *ushin-no-jo*, connected or associated through semantic meaning (Mostow 1996, p.15).

Kakekotoba or a pivot words are a rhetorical device used in wordplay or punning (not necessarily humourous). The phonetic reading of characters is used to suggest several interpretations. For example 松 *matsu* literally means “pine tree” and 待つ *matsu* "to wait". Both of these words can be implied at the same time, in order to present multiple meanings with only using a single word. In order for the ambiguous senses of the word to be more apparent*, kakekotoba* are generally written using hiragana, so in this example, *matsu* would be written as まつ (Word finder 2019).

This technique of pivoting words is closely related to the far more general *engo,* or word association. Words that are related closely semantically are used to associate ideas but do not have a direct grammatical relationship. An example is present in the poem number fifty-five.

滝の音は	*Taki no oto wa*
絶えて久しく	*Taete hisashiku*
なりぬれど	*Narinuredo*
名こそ流れて	*Na koso nagarete*
なほ聞えけれ	*Naho kikoe kere*

(Shigeo 2016)

The word *nagaru*, which means “to flow” or “to be carried along” is an *engo* of the word *taki*, which means “waterfall”. Although *nagarete* is grammatically connected to *na* “name”, it refers to both the waterfall flowing on and the name of the waterfall that is to be carried along (Mostow 1996, p.15).

3. Study and discussion

3.1 Poem number three

あしびきの	*ashibikino*
山鳥の尾の	*yamadori no o no*
しだり尾の	*shidari o no*
長々し夜を	*naganagashi yo wo*
ひとりかも寝む	*hitorikamonemu*

(Shigeo 2016)

This poem is attributed to a court poet *Kakinomoto no Hitomaro* and was drawn from another anthology called *Shūishū*, but its original appearance was in the *Man'yōshū*, the oldest known collection of classical Japanese poetry. That being said, the original version was somewhat different in form to this one (Mostow 1996, p.149).

The first line, *ashibikino,* is arguably the most difficult for translators, due to it being a *makura-kotoba*, in this instance modifying the following word *yamatori* (literally mountain-bird). In the *Man'yōshū*, this phrase was written using the chinese characters that meant literally “foot-cypress- 's”. However, medieval poets seemed to take *ashi* to mean “reed” (Mostow 1996, p.149). According to manabu-oshieru.com (2019), it is a pillow word for mountain.

Yamadori in the second line has the meaning of a type of a pheasant, typically either a copper pheasant or a mountain pheasant, but can also mean just a bird that’s habitat is in the mountains. *O* is “tail” so the meaning of the row is “the tail of a mountain pheasant”. In the third line, *shidari o* means “drooping tail” (Jisho.org 2005).

In this poem, the first three lines serve, in principal, as a preface for the adjective *naganagashi*, meaning “long-long”. If this preface is interpreted as only applying to

the following *yo* (“night”) then it would be considered *mushin*, or minimally motivated, but if one interprets it as describing everything that follows, (*hirorikamonemu* meaning “sleeping alone”) then it can be considered *ushin*, or fully motivated. The repetition of the particle *no* is used to emphasize the long night through technical means, which was greatly appreciated in Teika’s time (Mostow 1996, p.150).

In *Shigeo’s* (2016, p.6) book, the meaning of the poem is explained as follows. “On this autumn night that is long-long like the tail of the mountain pheasant, I will have to sleep alone without a visit from the person I long for, won’t I…”

3.1.1 Translations

Translation by MacCauley

In *Hyakunin-Isshu (Single Songs of a Hundred Poets) and Nori no Hatsu-Ne (The Dominant Note of the Law)* (1917)

Ah! the foot-drawn trail
Of the mountain-pheasant's tail
Drooped like down-curved branch!—
Through this long, long-dragging night
Must I keep my couch alone?

Translations by Mostow

In *Pictures of the heart* (1996)

Must I sleep alone
through the long autumn nights,
long like the dragging tail
of the mountain pheasant
separated from his dove?

In *The Hundred Poets Compared* (2007)

Must I sleep alone
through the long autumn nights,
long like the dragging tail
of the pheasant
in the foot-wearying mountains?

Translation by McMillan

In *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each (2008)*

The long tail of the copper pheasant trails — drags on and on like this long night in the lonely mountains where like that bird I too must sleep without my love.

3.1.2 Analysis

MacCauley's translation, which is also the oldest one out of the four, is done in a manner where each row in English corresponds to Japanese. The exclamation "Ah!" is added to the beginning of the poem and the *makura-kotoba ashibikino* is translated as "foot-drawn trail". The second row corresponds to the original text, but in the third the likeness to a branch is added, which there is no mention in Japanese. Whereas there is no direct mention to a night that drags on in the poem word-for-word, as mentioned before the repetition of *no* fulfils that role. The word "couch" is used, giving the poem a more archaic feel, implying the classical origins of the Japanese version.

In contrast with the first translation, Mostow's translations start with the row that would correspond to the last one in the original. The second one refers to autumn, which is not mentioned in the original, but since the night is implied to be dragging on is not an unreasonable conclusion to come to. When comparing the two poems translated by Mostow, we can see that the last two rows are what differ from each other. This makes the poem flow better and is in accordance to Venuti's translation

theory, but changes the nuance which is shown. “The mountain pheasant” is shortened to just “the pheasant”, and where the first iteration makes mention of the pheasant’s dove which is not included in the Japanese version, the second changes it to an interpretation of *ashibikino*. The *makura-kotoba* is omitted in the first translation.

McMillain’s translation as written in the book *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each,* has each word of the poem written on a separate row. In the introduction to his book, McMillain writes that in some cases the words of the translations have been arranged to evoke visually the images which are shown in the poetry. It seems that the *makura-kotoba* in the poem is translated to “lonely mountains”. Where the first three translations say that the night is long like the pheasant’s tail, but the last one compares switches that and speaks of the pheasant’s tail that is long like the night. McMillain also writes “I too must sleep without my love” which is similar to the ending of Mostow’s first translation in its interpretation of the line *hitorikamunemu,* which technically does not state that one is without one’s lover, but just alone.

3.2 Poem number ten

これやこの	*kore ya kono*
行くも帰るも	*iku mo kaeru mo*
別れては	*wakerete wa*
知るも知らぬも	*shiru mo shiranu mo*
逢坂の関	*Ōsaka no seki*

(Shigeo 2016)

There is very little information about the person, *Semimaru*, to whom this poem is attributed to - it is not known if he even existed. Mid-Tokugawa-period documents claim that he was the fourth leader of a “blind priest” tradition, *Konjaku Monogatari Shū* (Tales of Times Now Past) records him as a former servant of Prince Atsumi and a son of Emperor Uda, who as a blind man became a famous *biwa* player, and in the *Tōkan Kikō,* he was identified as the blind and abandoned son of Emperor Daigo (Mostow 1996, p.171).

The first line of the poem has a meaning along the lines of “things such as that and this”, with the particle *ya* implying that there are other things after the two nouns already listed. *Iku* in the second line means “to go” and *kaeru* “to return” with the particle *mo* that is repeated meaning “also” or “as well”. *Wakarete* in line three means “to separate” or “to part” and the particle *wa* is a topic marker. A similar pattern to the second line, the particle *mo* is also repeated in the fourth line with the verbs *shiru* which means “to know” and *shiranu* which means “to not know”.

The last line of the poem is an *uta-makura*, carrying the meaning of a meeting place and it can be said that the entire poem rests on this phrase. The headnote to this poem in Teika’s original collection translated by Mostow reads: “On seeing people coming to and from, when living in a hut he had built at the Barrier of *Ōsaka*” (Mostow 1996, p.171). This Barrier is situated on the border of the present-day Yamashiro, which is now known as Kyoto, and Omi in Shiga prefecture (Ogurasansou 2001).

Shigeo (2016, p.20) explains the meaning of this poem as follows. “Well, this is where some people travel from the capital to the country in the west, also people who return to the capital, people who know each other as well as those who do not know; those who will meet again after parting, as its name suggests, that’s the main point of the barrier of *Ōsaka*.”

3.2.1 Translations

Translation by MacCauley

In *Hyakunin-Isshu (Single Songs of a Hundred Poets) and Nori no Hatsu-Ne (The Dominant Note of the Law)* (1917)

Truly, this is where
Travelers who go or come
Over parting ways,—
Friends or strangers,—all must meet;
'Tis the gate of "Meeting Hill."

Translations by Mostow

In *Pictures of the heart* (1996)

This it is! That
going, too, and coming, too,
continually separating,
those known and those unknown,
meet at the Barrier of *Ōsaka*

In *The Hundred Poets Compared* (2007)

This it is! That
going, too, and coming, too,
only to separate —
those known and those unknown,
meet at the Barrier of *Ōsaka,*
‘Meeting Hill’.

Translation by McMillan

In *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each (2008)*

So this is the place!
The crowds,
coming
going
meeting
parting;
friends
strangers,
known
unknown —
The Osaka Barrier

3.2.2 Analysis

The translation by McCauley adds the word “truly” in the first line of the poem and instead of the word for word technique used in the translation of poem number three, the meaning of the line is changed. In the second line, the subject “travellers” is added and again in the third like the subject “ways”. The words *shiru mo shiranu mo* are interpreted as “friends or strangers”. The fourth line adds the phrase “all must meet", which refers to the *uta-makura* in the last line, translated as “the gate of Meeting Hill”. The name *Ōsaka* itself is omitted.

Mostow's approach with this poem seems to be more literal, with the first and second row being nearly direct translations, even the repetition of "too" is involved, matching the repetition of the particle *mo*. When comparing his translations to each other, the first significant difference is the third row, which seems to be in line with Venuti's translation theory, with "Only to separate" being more fluid in English that "continually separating". The fourth line is once again translated closer to the original text than what MacCauley did, with the only addition being the subject "those". The second difference between the two is that the line "'Meeting Hill'" is added at the end of the poem, making it so that the amount of lines no longer matches the original, but adding some context for English readers, who presumably do not know the inbedded meaning of the *uta-makura Ōsaka no seki*, which is translated as "Barrier of *Ōsaka*".

McMillain's translation of this poem has once again much more lines than the original and is translated using a much more free technique. The first line, *kore ya kono*, is interpreted as "So this is the place!", whereas one can assume that there would be a lot of people, in the original there is no mention of a "crowd". Same for the word "meeting", which is not mentioned literally in the poem, but is implied with the use of the *uta-makura*. *Shiru mo shiranu mo* is elaborated to include both "friends", "strangers", "known" and "unknown". The *uta-makura* is translated simply as "The Osaka Barrier" without explaining the embedded meaning

3.3 Poem number eighteen

住の江の	*sumi no e no*
岸による波	*kishi ni yoru nami*
よるさへや	*yoru sahe ya*
夢の通ひ路	*yume no kayohiji*
人目よくらむ	*hito me yoku ranu*

(Shigeo 2016)

The author of this poem is *Lord Fujiwara no Toshiyuki*, who participated in many different poetry contests during the reign of the four emperors he served. He was also one of the Thirty-Six Poetic Immortals and a famous calligrapher. The headnote to this poem indicates that it was written and used in what was known as “the Empress’ Poetry Contest” during the *Kanpyō* Era (889 - 898 CE) (Mostow 1996, p.195).

The first row of this poem starts with *Suminoe* (*e* meaning bay and *no* being a possessive particle), which is another name Sumiyoshi Bay, known for a famous shrine built to the god of the sea (Mostow 1996, p.195). In the second and third line, sound repetition and association (*engo*) is used. Where the second line *kishi ni yoru nami* “the waves that approach the shore” with the word *yoru* meaning “the shore” and the third line “*yoru sahe*” means “even at night” with *yoru* meaning “night” (Shigeo 2016, p.37). It should be noted that both of these *yoru* are written with hiragana and not kanji.

The fourth line carries the meaning of “Passage of dreams” and in the fourth *hito me* means “glance” or “(in) the public eye”. At the time this poem was written, it was widely believed that those who were truly in love would visit their lover in their dreams (Mostow 1996, p.195). Therefore, the last part of the poem, which implies “not visiting”, can be interpreted either as the poet’s lover not visiting him or the poet himself not appearing in his lover’s dreams.

For this poem, *Shigeo's* (2016, p.36) explanation is as follows. "The waves (*yoru*) approach the shore at Sumi's bay, but it is not those "waves" (written with kana *yoru* which could also be "night") anyhow from noon to night. On the way to the person I think about inside my dreams, I wonder why I have to hide from the eyes of others."

3.3.1 Translations

Translation by MacCauley

In *Hyakunin-Isshu (Single Songs of a Hundred Poets) and Nori no Hatsu-Ne (The Dominant Note of the Law)* (1917)

Lo! the gathered waves
On the shore of Sumi's bay!
E'en in gathered night,
When in dreams I go to thee,
I must shun the eyes of men.

Translations by Mostow

In *Pictures of the heart* (1996)

Must you so avoid others' eyes
that not even at night,
along the road of dreams,
will you draw night like the waves
to the shore of Sumi-no-e Bay?

In *The Hundred Poets Compared* (2007)

Must you so avoid others' eyes
that not even at night,
along the road of dreams,
will you draw night like the waves
to the shore of Sumi-no-e Bay?

Translation by McMillan

In *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each (2008)*

Unlike the waves
beating on the shores
of Sumiyoshi Bay,
you whom I long to meet
avoid the eyes of others
and refuse to come to me,
even at night,
even on the road of dreams

3.3.2 Analysis

In McCauley's translation, similarly to poem number three there has been an exclamation added in the first line. When compared to the original, the first two lines are flipped, with the first line talking about the waves and the second mentioning "Sumi's bay". The language used in the poem is archaic, words such as "E'en" and "thee" are used. This translation interprets the poem in a manner that the poet is the one going to his lover and also the one who is the subject of the general eye and does not make reference to the negation in *ranu*. *Engo* is shown through the repetition of the word "gathered" which ties "waves" to "night".

Mostow's interpretation of the original poem seems to be the opposite of McCauley's where he translates the poem in a manner where it is the person this poem is written to that avoids the eyes of people. It is also implied that they do not show up in the poet's dreams. In its form, the poem is backwards to the original, starting with translations of the last two lines and ending on Sumi-no-e Bay. Out of all the poems looked at by this thesis, this is the only one that Mostow's second translation does not differ from the first one. The *engo* is translated through direct comparison by the use of the word "like".

McMillain’s interpretation of this poem is more similar to Mostow’s rather than McCauley’s, implying that it is the one the poet is in love with who does not come to his dreams and averts their eyes. The translation does not maintain the original amount of lines and the order of events is also changed, with the waves being mentioned before the bay and the translation to *yume no kayohiji*, “road of dreams” written as the last line instead of preceding “the eyes of others”. Once again, *engo* is shown through direct comparison, in this case using the word “unlike”.

3.4 Poem number fifty-one

かくとだに	*kaku to dani*
えやはいぶきの	*e ya wa ibuki no*
さしも草	*sashimo gusa*
さしも知らじな	*sashimo shirija na*
燃ゆる思ひを	*moyuru omohi wo*

(Shigeo 2016)

Lord *Fujiwara no Sanekata*, who was the author of this poem, was one of the greatest poets of his time and is counted among the Late Classical Thirty-Six Poetic Immortals. The headnote of this poem stated that it was sent to a woman whose attraction the poet was trying to win (Mostow 1996, p.293).

The opening line *kaku to dani* carries the meaning “even if I love you so much” (Shigeo 2016, p.102). The second line on the other hand carries multiple meanings. As Mostow puts it in his commentary of this poem, it includes a complicated web of pivot words (*kakekotoba*) and word associations (*engo*) (Mostow 1996, p.293). It can also be read as “Although I could say it, I cannot”, with *ibu* meaning “to say” (Shigeo 2016, p.102). On the other hand, “Ibuki” is the name of a famous mountain, known for *sashimo* grass or *mogusa*, a plant known in English as Japanese mugwort which was used in incense-like cones and burned on the skin in a kind of thermal acupuncture (Mostow 1996, p.293). Therefore the association between *mogusa* and *moyuru* (burning), which is furthered even more with the use of *omohi*, meaning “desire” which contains the syllable *hi*, meaning “fire”. The *sashimo* in the third line can also be read as *sa shimo* which means “that much”.

Shigeo’s (2016, p.102) explanation of this poem is as follows. “Even though I miss you so much, not to mention the love in my heart that burns with fire like the *sashimo* grass of mount *Ibuki*, is such an intense thing which you probably do not know, for I can not say it.”

3.4.1 Translations

Translation by MacCauley

In *Hyakunin-Isshu (Single Songs of a Hundred Poets) and Nori no Hatsu-Ne (The Dominant Note of the Law)* (1917)

That, 'tis as it is,
How can I make known to her?
So, she may n'er know
That the love I feel for her
Like Ibuki's moxa burns.

Translations by Mostow

In *Pictures of the heart* (1996)

Can I even say
“I love you this much”? — No, and so
you do not know of it
anymore than of the *sashimo* grasses of
Ibuki,
my burning love for you!

In *The Hundred Poets Compared* (2007)

Can I even say
“This much”? — No, and so
you do not know of it
any more than of the *sashimo* grasses
of Ibuki,
my burning love for you!

Translation by McMillan

In *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each* (2008)

Can I let you know
what consumes me?
Unknown to you,
my heart blazes
like red hot moxa
aflame with love
for you.

3.4.2 Analysis

With this poem, MacCauley's translation once again uses archaic words such as "'tis" and "n'er". It appears that the first line of the original has been interpreted as things being as they are without any way to change them. The order that the contents of the poem are mentioned have been altered in the translation. The word association is incorporated with the last two lines, tying love to the burning of Ibuki's moxa with the word "like". He exchanges the original's *omohi* "passion" to "love". The notion of wondering how to let the poet's love interest know of his feelings is added.

Mostow's interpretation of the first line of the poem differs to MacCauley's in wondering instead if the poet can say his feelings. Instead of mentioning the association of burning love and burning moxa, it is implied that the poet's love interest is unaware of his burning love just as the sashimo grasses of Ibuki are unaware. In the newer version of Mostow's translation "I love you this much" is changed to "This much". Presumably this change was done to make the poem flow better in English.

The first line in McMillain's translation is similar to Mostow's but instead of using the word "say" he uses "let you know". The word association is even more drawn out connecting the love that is aflame for the poet's love, to the red hot moxa and the

poet' love that blazes. By using these words, it is signified that the feelings that are being conveyed are extremely intense. Another parallel is drawn between love consuming the poet and fire (which consumes its fuel).

3.5 Poem number seventy-four

憂かりける	*ukarikeru*
人を初瀬の	*hito wo hatsuse no*
山おろしよ	*yama oroshi yo*
はげしかれとは	*hageshikare to wa*
祈らぬものを	*inoranu mono wo*

(Shigeo 2016)

The author of this poem is Lord *Minamoto no Toshiyori*, was the leading poet of his day. He has contributed over two hundred poems to various imperial anthologies such as the *Kin'yōshū.* According to the headnote of this poem, it was composed in the sentiment of “love for a woman who will not meet one even though one has prayed to the gods” (Mostow 1996, p.360).

The first line of this poem carries the meaning of “carelessly rejecting” or “heartless”, which is a description for the first word *hito* in the second row, meaning “person”. *Hatsuse* was the place where Hase Temple was, a frequent place for lovers which is included in the *makura-kotoba* of this poem, *hatsuse no yama oroshi yo* (Mostow 1996, p.360-361). The last line meaning roughly “(of) the thing(s) I did not pray for”. The poem ends with just the particle *wo*, which is unusual considering Japanese grammar, where the last word in the sentence is always a verb, and gives a feeling as if the ending of the poem was left in the air or there was more that the poet wished to say.

The meaning of the poem is explained by *Shiego* (2016, p.148) as follows. “I fell in love with a person whose heart is cold and who did not answer my love, so I prayed to *Kannon* of *Hatsuse* and to the wind of the mountain of *Kannon* which is intense, just like you. What can I do for the things that are lost and which I did not pray for. How sad it is…”

3.2.1 Translations

Translation by MacCauley

In *Hyakunin-Isshu (Single Songs of a Hundred Poets) and Nori no Hatsu-Ne (The Dominant Note of the Law)* (1917)

I did not make prayer
(At the shrine of Mercy's God),
That the unkind one
Should become as pitiless
As the storms of Hase's hills.

Translations by Mostow

In *Pictures of the heart* (1996)

“Make that heartless
woman, O mountain storm
of Hatsuse Temple —
crueller still!” — this is not
what I prayed for; and yet…

In *The Hundred Poets Compared* (2007)

“Make that heartless
one, O mountain storm
of Hatsuse Temple,
crueller still!” — this is not
what I prayed for; and yet…

Translation by McMillan

In *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each (2008)*

At Hase I prayed to Kannon
to plead with her
who made me suffer so,
but like fierce storm winds
raging down the mountain
she became colder still—
It's not what I asked for…

3.4.2 Analysis

MacCauley's translation starts with the line that would correspond to the last one in the original, mentioning how the poet did not make prayer. The use of brackets in the second line is interesting to note due to the nuance it gives to the mention of the shrine. It was not named in the original, but referred to with the place name included in the *makura-kotoba*. The mention of storm is compared to the heartlessness of the poet's love interest.

Mostow's translation of this poem starts with a literal exclamation to the mountain storm as its interpretation of the *makura-kotoba* used in the original. In the second iteration of the poem, the translation of *ukarikeru hito* is changed from "that heartless woman" to "that heartless one", making that translation closer to the original. This and replacing one dash with a coma are the only changes made. The ending particle *wo* is represented by the added phrase "and yet…" at the end of the poem.

McMillain's translation has two more lines than the original. The interpretation of the *makura-kotoba*, similar to MacCauley, is that the raging mountain winds are like the woman about whom the poet prayed to Kannon. The first line of the original is not translated to be heartless but instead cold, which in English has a similar meaning but is also connected to the wind. The feeling of the particle *wo* is implied by the ellipses at the end of the poem.

3.6 Discussion

Having analysed the selected poems and their translations, the research questions can be answered.

- How was the decorative language translated from Japanese to English?

The *makura-kotoba* examined were *ashibikino* in poem number three and *hatsuse no yama oroshi yo* in poem number seventy-four. *Ashibikino* was translated in three different ways, firstly as the “foot-drawn trail” by MacCauley, secondly as “the foot-wearying mountains” by the second iteration of Mostow’s translation and thirdly as “the lonely mountains” by McMillain. It should be noted that in the first iteration of Mostow’s translation in *Pictures of the heart* it was omitted and instead the line “separated from his dove" was added, which was not in the original Japanese version of the poem.

The second *makura-kotoba hatsuse no yama oroshi yo* from poem number seventy-four is translated as “storms of Hase's hills” by MacCauley. Mostow interprets the phrase as the poet crying out to the storm and writes the exclamation to the storm in quotations, referring to the storm itself as “O mountain storm of Hatsuse Temple”. McMillain’s version of the poem includes the words “fierce storm winds raging down the mountain” to which he, similar to MacCauley, compares the poet’s lover.

The *Uta-makura Ōsaka no seki* in poem number ten was translated as follows. MacCauley’s translation “'Tis the gate of "Meeting Hill"” carries the meaning behind the place name but does not name it. “The Barrier of *Ōsaka*” in the first translation by Mostow does not state the significance of this place, but in his second translation another line is added with the words “‘Meeting Hill’”, which helps the English reader better grasp what the Barrier of *Ōsaka* really means.

The example of *jo-kotoba* given is in poem number eighteen, where the first two lines serve as *jo-kotoba* to the word *yoru* in line number three. Due to this being a technical nuance in Japanese and hinging on the use of the word *yoru* , it is difficult to say whether or not the translators took it into consideration or not, but it does not appear so from looking at the translations without additional context.

Engo was highlighted in poem number eighteen and poem number fifty-one. The *engo* used in poem number eighteen is translated by MacCauley by using repetition of the word “gathered” which ties “waves” to “night”, whereas both Mostow and McMillain used direct comparison by using words such as “like” and “unlike”. In poem number fifty one, MacCauley uses the word “like” to tie feelings the poet holds to the burning of Ibuki’s moxa. Mostow, instead of mentioning the association of burning love and burning moxa, implies that the poet’s love interest is unaware of his burning love just as the sashimo grasses of Ibuki are unaware. McMillain, similar to MacCauley, ties red hot moxa to the poet’s blazing love to with the word “like”.

Poem number fifty-one also includes *kakekotoba*, which as mentioned before are oftentimes used together with *engo*. The *kakekotoba* in this poem are firstly the *hi* (“fire”) in *omohi* (“desire”) which is also noted previously as *engo*, *sashimo* in the third line which can be read as *sa shimo* (“that much”) and the *ibu* of *ibuki* which can be read as *ifu*, an older reading of *iu* (“to say”).

It appears that some types of decorative language, such as *engo*, are easier to translate compared to others, such as *jo-kotoba* due to the technical nature of the latter. Word association is a technique which is already widely used in English poetry, whereas specific context reliant words or place names which carry deeper meaning native to Japan are not something an every-day English poetry reader would need to be familiar with.

- Was the meaning of the poem or the nuance changed significantly when translating? If so, in what way?

Instead of saying that the meaning of the poems was changed in translation, it is more accurate to state that different translators interpreted the poems each in a different manner. Therefore the biggest differences lie mostly in the nuances of the poems and not the overall meaning. Unlike what was expected before the start of the study, it is not so much that the nuance is lost, but on the contrary added.

Poem number three was interpreted by each of the three translators as the poet having to spend the long night that is compared to a pheasant's tail alone. MacCauley's translation follows the form of the original, but adds the comparison of the pheasant's tail to a curved branch, which is not mentioned in the original. Mostow's first translation of this poem mentions the pheasant's dove, again something which is not present in the original, but in the second version this is removed. McMillain's translation, instead of just sleeping alone, writes "sleep without my love". The loneliness of the long and dragging night is also shown through the form of the poem, which in the book *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each (2008)* is written so that each word is on a separate line.

In their translations of poem number ten, each of the translators have attempted to paint a picture of people coming and going just as the original. MacCauley's and Mostow's translations follows the form of the original. Mostow's second version adds the explanation of "'Meeting Hill'" to the Barrier of *Ōsaka*. McMillan's translation shows the flowing of people not only through the words used but also the form. Similar to poem number three, many of the rows of the poem contain only one word, except for the first, second and last.

There were two different interpretations of poem number eighteen amongst the examined translations. The first was that the poet visited his lover in her dreams and had to hide from the eyes of others and the second one that the poet's lover refused to come to him in his dreams and hid from the eyes of others. MacCauley's translation followed the first interpretation whereas both Mostow and McMillan's followed the second.

MacCauley's interpretation of poem number fifty-one changes the original's "passion" to "love" and adds the notion that the poet is wondering how to let his love know how he feels. Mostow on the other hand frames the poet's feelings as a direct question, interpreting the first line as the poem as "Can I even say". McMillain does a similar thing, but instead of "say" the phrase "let you know" is used and there is no direct quote, unlike Mostow. The references to fire are prevalent, with words such as "blazes" and "aflame" being used and the form is once again changed - when compared to the original there are more rows.

In poem number seventy-four, MacCauley refers to the heartless lover of the poet as "unkind one" and refers to the shrine on *Hatsuse* mountain as "the shrine of Mercy's God". The second line in which that is noted is also in brackets, adding nuance. Mostow's translation of this poem makes the poet out to address the wind itself, it includes the exclamation in citations and directly addresses it as "O mountain storm of Hatsuse Temple". McMillain's translation, which has two more lines than the original, compares the raging mountain winds to the cold woman about whom the poet prayed to Kannon.

Another observation one can make when looking at the Japanese poems and comparing them to the English versions is the use of personal pronouns like "I", "You" and "her". While in Japanese the pronouns are usually not clearly stated, the English translations clearly require them. For example, in poem number three, all three translators interpreted the subject of the poem as "I", that being the poet himself, whereas reading the original one could interpret it being about the bird who sleeps alone.

- What differences appear in the English translations?

MacCauley's translations, being the oldest, generally use more archaic words and stick to more of a direct translation, consistent in form with the original. The first versions of Mostow's translations are also closer to the form of the Japanese

versions and often attempt to convey the technical nuances in the original, for example repeating “too” in poem number then, where the particle *mo* is repeated in the original. His newer versions stick to this mostly, but some changes are made in order for the poems to flow better, which is in accordance with the translation theory at hand. In the examined poems, McMillain’s translations all have more rows than the original and other translations. They are also written in a form that is more free-flowing than the others. Oftentimes the place names are the only thing that gives away the fact that they are translations at all, and therefore it can be said that an approach that favours domestication was taken when translating.

4. Conclusion

This thesis hypothesised that translating classical Japanese poetry to English will pose difficulties not only due to the aspect of translation, but also the field of classical poetry. These difficulties were expected to be highlighted when translating decorative language. From examining different translations of the selected poems, this hypothesis appears to be true due to the fact that the translations differed greatly. That shows that there is no one single way to translate these poems. Instead, the translation not only depends on the translator's interpretation of the original, but also their research into the cultural background of each of the poems and their authors due to how loaded with hidden meaning they can be. Each instance of decorative language used in the original version of each poem poses a new challenge for the translator which must be solved on a case-by-case basis. At times there is no clear consensus on the meaning of each piece of decorative language and some of these meanings have been lost to time.

In the study and discussion of this thesis, all three of the research questions were answered. The different translations highlighted above nearly all had different takes on the decorative language and how to translate it. In some cases the original phrases, such as the *makura-kotoba* in poem number three or the *jo-kotoba* in poem number eighteen, were even omitted. From this, one can draw the conclusion that it is not easy to simply translate the type of poetry at hand and that the translator must heavily rely on their own interpretation of the poem. Generally, there seemed to be a strong attempt of not losing any meaning or nuance of the original poems. That being said, oftentimes additional nuance was added in the English versions through added words, phrases or pronouns. As expected, the style of translating poetry appears to have evolved through the recent decades and the newest translations analysed appear to have been written with domestication in mind, which is in accordance with Venuti's translation theory.

Although specific conclusions can be drawn, due to the very small sample size it is difficult to see a more generalized pattern when it comes to translation decorative words. It would be extremely beneficial in future studies to have a larger sample size that does not focus only on poems from one anthology and analyse a larger number of translations.

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